



*Always Ready
Always There*

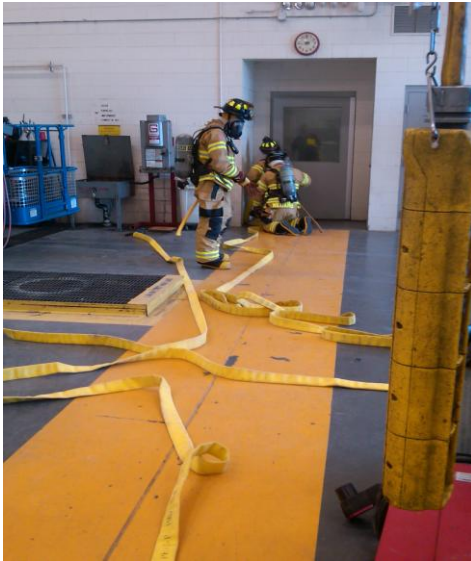
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OCTC Fire & Emergency Services Conducts drill

By Lt. Col. Dan Johnson



Fire fighters prepare to enter a smoke-filled fuel and electrical repair room at the MATES facility during a drill on April 18. Photo by Capt. Ben Cook

With smoke billowing from the Fuel and Electric Repair room at the MATES facility on the early morning of April 18, Soldiers on site responded to the situation as expected; calmly and professionally while executing their evacuation plan as rehearsed a hundred times before. This time, however, there was another player on the scene.

The Orchard Combat Training Center Fire and Emergency Services station, the newest organization to the Idaho Army National Guard, swarmed; axes at the ready, prepared and trained for what lay ahead.

Beginning in October 2013 with the hiring of Chief Warrant Officer

Nicholas Andros of Oasis, Idaho and culminating with a group of an additional 19 state technician employees in November, the team of Soldiers and Airmen began their journey toward molding themselves into an effective rapid attack asset for the training site. This first response unit was created out of the necessity to prevent loss of life and fire damage within the structures located seven miles south of the Orchard exit off I-84.

"It's been nice to be able to coordinate and synchronize our emergency response and evacuation drills with our newest neighbors; the OCTC Fire Station," stated Capt. Ben Cook, MATES superintendent. "At the conclusion of the fire drill, we identified a few things to work on before our next exercise. I really enjoyed the realism of having smoke billow out of the building and seeing the fire fighters go to work running hoses and looking for casualties. It really is a team effort here since we maintain and conduct all necessary repairs on the same fire trucks that they're responding with."

In the past six months, the organization has gone from a concept to a fully functional emergency response force. The dedication and work of Soldiers and Airman staffing this organization is evident. Crews have worked tirelessly in efforts of mastering their skills to ensure they are prepared for each emergency they will need to mitigate. The organization has served

as a great opportunity for firefighters who are currently assigned to the Idaho Army and Air National Guard to obtain a career in their primary technical field.

Response crews are optimistic that they will be able to provide the local community—including those traveling on I-84—professional emergency services. Known as Mutual Aid Agreements, they are awaiting command approval before full implementation. These agreements would reduce emergency response times to both vehicle accidents on the interstate and residential structural fires within a 15-minute radius.

"Assisting the local community with emergency response capabilities with response times they have never had before is a great example of the National Guard's dedication to the Gem state. I am excited to see the progress made by our organization and I look forward to the coming years. We have joined a great team at the Orchard Combat Training Center as we are all here for the same reason: to ensure Soldiers are provided with the best training in the United States," Andros said.

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